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## A BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF NEW MEXICO.

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My doubt lest any audience I might have in Detroit might know more of New Mexico than I myself after a dozen years' residence within its borders was measurably lulled last evening when a member exclaimed on learning my home, "Oh! that is just above Peru."

I am sure the gentleman did not pertain to the Section on State Medicine, but the incident emboldens me in displaying this bird's-eye view of the territory I represent, the land of the undying sun, the purple grape and the plaintive burro.

There being no apparent provision for climatology in the several sections, by the courtesy of the officers of the Section on State Medicine, I am permitted to read here a few notes upon the characteristics of New Mexico and their climatic bearing upon the great problems of the prevention of disease.

Since the Hon. Jacob H. Gallinger of New Hampshire, less than two months ago, introduced a joint resolution in the Senate of the United States pro-



viding for a commission to select a suitable site for the establishment of a great national sanatorium in one of the territories for the treatment of pulmonary diseases; and especially as the bulk of his corroborating testimony relates to New Mexico, I feel that a paper bearing on that territory, its merits and demerits, may fairly be ranged under the title of State Medicine.

New Mexico, oldest named of American regions marked by the infrequency of phthisis, has, by reason of its inaccessibility and of its slow social development, been greatly neglected as a field of resort for phthisical and other invalids. Whatever claim Colorado has to your patronage, New Mexico has in equal force, with the added advantage of a lower latitude and hence warmer winters. This has not been justly appreciated, and the superior social features of the Centennial State have given it a position in eastern thought above our Sunshine State not justly merited when the question is one of saving the life of the tuberculous and not of furnishing them luxuries.

So vast is New Mexico that England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland could be placed within its borders, I am told by our nimble arithmetician, while in altitude it varies from 3,800 feet, on the plains of its south and east borders, to lofty mountain ranges over 12,000 feet high. Necessarily, here is variety to suit a multitude of varying cases. So much misconception exists concerning this wide combination of mountain and plateau that I hasten to briefly mention the leading features of its climate.

The mean annual temperature of Santa Fé at 7,000 feet altitude is  $48^{\circ}$  and that of Las Vegas at 6,450 feet  $51^{\circ}$ —the latter corresponding with Peoria and Indianapolis.

That of the plains is considerably higher, being  $55^{\circ}$  to  $60^{\circ}$  toward the south.



As to moisture—the dryness of New Mexico is notorious. The annual precipitation in 30 odd years at Fort Union not far from Las Vegas—in the northern part—averaged 18 inches, but at Santa Fé only 15 and at El Paso, just below our southern border, but 12 inches. When it is remembered that one half of this falls in midsummer and but six to eight per cent in winter—and this wholly as snow—it will be seen that invalids here escape the dreaded combination of wet and cold.<sup>1</sup>

The figures for percentage of moisture are low, the annual mean for many years at Santa Fé being but 45, the monthly mean not passing above 54 in winter and often falling to 30 (and even 20 at Las Vegas) in spring and early summer.

Our governor when asked to give New Mexico a name of sentiment dubbed it the Sunshine State. The sky seems infinitely high above our heads there as contrasted with that of Detroit or New York, and we bask in the sun's rays to a degree hardly known elsewhere. A Signal Bureau analysis placed El Paso, Tex., and Fort Stanton, New Mexico, in a short preferred list for least average cloudiness, with but 29 and 25 days respectively per annum reported cloudy. In one recent year I noticed Santa Fé accredited with 27 cloudy days, while Detroit had 123 and Chicago 116, while the proportion of days rated clear in New Mexico to days called fair is immensely greater than in the lake cities.

New Mexico is often spoken of as a windy state and visitors carp at us because we do not report our winds. Let me say that the much visited Colorado quite equals us in the annual mileage of wind. Government observers at Santa Fé and Fort Stanton report an annual movement of about 60,000 miles. That of Colorado Springs has been observed as high

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<sup>1</sup> The average total precipitation in three winter months at Fort Union for 10 years was 1.09 inches of water, all as snow.

as 90,000 miles in a year, and especially do this highly favored resort and Denver report winds exceeding in maximum velocity those in New Mexico, a signal advantage to the latter region.

In average velocity Santa Fé wind ranks with the soothing Jacksonville, Fla., as well as in total mileage. while as a matter of fact the whole east slope of the Rocky Mountains is wind swept to about a similar extent—as to annual mileage—the wind movement of New Mexico is actually less than that of Detroit and St Paul by one sixth, less than that of Boston and New York by one fourth. It is the dust incident to the dryness (as in the other southwestern states) that has given New Mexico a bad name by accentuating its winds. But this is chiefly annoying in the streets of our towns and here is being combatted by sprinkling as is done in the towns of California and Colorado.

A mean annual temperature of 48 to 51 degrees should sufficiently assure eastern physicians and their patients that the winters in the higher altitudes, as at Santa Fé and Las Vegas, cannot pass without occasional zero temperatures, on one or two days only in some winters, in others for two or three weeks, in January the air being as still, clear and crisp as that of Minnesota (but dryer), and the public health rising to a maximum. I dwell on these facts because still invalids stream into New Mexico expecting, by the delusive suggestions of its last name, to find a tropical climate with the fruits and flowers of the same. Even in the southern sections, at lowest altitudes, it is far from tropical.

We offer simply a very dry air, a vast amount of sunshine, a breeze that never is warped into cyclonic effects, altitudes from 3,800 to 7,000 feet with towns providing constantly improving shelter and comforts for invalid visitors, or even 9,000 feet, with occasional dwellings, for more tolerant cases. Necessar-



ily the air is pure, for except to a small extent in the Rio Grande valley, there is no malaria, and water is too scarce to waste it in making swamps.

Visiting doctors wonder how the New Mexican doctors live, so meagre is the practice afforded, so healthful the climate. The Las Vegas doctor often has long spells of enforced idleness when he cultivates philanthropy and the softer virtues. During the past year many months saw our physicians but lightly employed, while our well equipped druggists were subsisting by selling perfumery and cigars. We have no regular seasonal diseases, as abdominal diseases in summer, malarial in autumn or pulmonary in winter—the light pharyngitis and bronchitis of the country is naturally more prevalent in December and January. Pleurisy is extremely rare; croupous pneumonia not at all common, catarrhal pneumonia but little more so. Acute articular rheumatism is uncommon. The renal degenerations are practically unknown. In nineteen years on the plains and mountain borders, I have not seen one genuine case of Bright's disease, and but a single case where an acute nephritis perhaps of zymotic origin—lingered and was fatal. If kidney degenerations can be foreseen or if they tend to prevail in certain families, certainly New Mexico is the place for resort and residence in such instances.

Indeed, the only really prevalent disorder is the lithæmia or concealed gouty diathesis, of which there is a curious abundance—at least in higher altitudes—but proper hygiene prevents or cures this.

The three inroads of influenza, though visiting us, made no deeper impression than our simplest winter visitation of sore throat. In the first no consumptives in Las Vegas were touched by it; in the second a few visiting invalids felt its force but recovered without apparent detriment. In fact no American

death in any way attributable to the influenza has occurred in my part of New Mexico.

The climate of New Mexico is especially adapted to the restoration of phthysical cases in the earlier stages—for instance, Mrs. A. of Chicago, age 23 years, continuously coughing for six months, sputa examined by a well known specialist and contained bacilli, history of increasing weakness. Ten weeks after reaching Las Vegas, New Mexico, all cough had ceased, no pus was expectorated, and she could run up long flights of stairs rapidly. Mrs. B. came to same place 14 years ago for cough, hæmorrhages and emaciation. Within three years all symptoms disappeared, she married, bore healthy children, and has lived with impunity the past three years in New England, a robust woman. These are sample cases, hardly scientifically reported, of which our territory can furnish many.

Cases with cavity, if not progressing too rapidly, on arrival will mend, but in the name of all honest Rocky Mountain doctors and tender hearted lodging house keepers let me beg that cases with advanced destruction of the lungs, high temperature and persistently rapid pulse be not sent to this country—or, at least, not to the higher localities.

On the other extreme there is no better climate in which persons who are merely weak, or who are lacking robust development, especially such as are of tuberculous stock, or in markedly delicate families may secure safety from phthisis or develop more robust bodies. Such families escape in New Mexico the sickness and premature death so likely to seize them in the damper states.

Scrutiny of the annual reports of a vast benevolent order reveals a remarkably lower death rate and sick list for this territory than for a string of central and eastern states, while the time lost per member by sickness was singularly less than in those



states—attesting the great salubrity of the climate.

The death rate of the resident American population, which I have studied a number of years, is low, ranging in Las Vegas from 12 to 6 per thousand per annum. As illuminating the unpleasant side of sending moribund consumptives to New Mexico, our gross death rate was increased from 22 to 56 per cent each year (in a series of years) by the deaths of these forlorn visitors. Moderate cardiac valvular disease need not bar a visitor, while occasionally extreme valvular obstruction may exist for years without detriment to health and comfort.

The visiting consumptives show a very minimum of the ordinary incidents of phthisis. Hæmoptysis is rare; I have prescribed for night sweats but twice in seven years; cough and expectoration generally diminish.

As to advancement in medical legislation, New Mexico has a Medical Examining Board under an old and clumsy statute. Efforts of our medical society to secure its remodelling on the best in other states have been baffled by politicians in our own profession. Similar fate befell bills concerning expert testimony and privileged witnesses among medical men. Formerly small-pox corpses were carried through the streets on boards by daylight for public burial, and not a few such were laid by the native faithful under the floors of the Catholic churches. Modern legislation has abolished all this. An excellent school law, now one year in successful operation, has quite taken the fancy of the natives and bids fair to be the first entering wedge for sanitary ideas. A recent curious statute forbids graveyards to lie nearer than 50 feet to any river; the former limit was 25 feet!

There is no territorial board of health, but local health officers do efficient service in a few towns. Hospitals exist in several towns. Our medical soci-

ety constantly agitates sanitary subjects. The fatalism of the Mexicans and their utter lack of appreciation of the sanctity of human life (when disease is in question) are the chief hindrances to sanitary reform. In a few weeks it will be my privilege to lecture before a summer normal school, chiefly of native teachers, on the prevention of disease. But from the start I shall be handicapped, for my prospective hearers do not dread or attempt to prevent the contagious diseases, and, when God wills it, all their little brothers may die and they will not complain.

Finally, we denizens of New Mexico marvel that eastern people do not make our higher altitudes a summer resort. All who have lived here unite in pronouncing the summers the nearest to ideally perfect that they have ever seen. The young people complain that the evenings are too cool to let them sit freely on the piazzas; the nights are always cool; the heat of the day—rarely touching  $90^{\circ}$ —is so tempered by the dryness as not to be oppressive; sun-strokes, like the cyclone, malaria, the flea, the mosquito, are unknown. High temperatures with high percentage of humidity are very rarely seen, and then but for an hour in the morning.